

**CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: January – March 2005**

**COUNTRY: Uzbekistan**

**USAID Cooperative Agreement No. 116-A-00-04-00010-00**

**Award period: September 30, 2004 – September 29, 2005**

**Total budget: \$125,000**

**Expenses to date: \$23,318.52**

**I. SUMMARY**

Despite the January 9 second-round election for 58 remaining seats in the lower house of the Oliy Majlis (OM), the dominant theme of the quarter for IRI was the ongoing struggle with the Uzbekistan government to accredit IRI's resident country director Greg Stephenson and issue him a visa proportionate to his position as IRI's in-country representative.

The January 9 second-round election was relatively uneventful. The remaining 58 seats were filled in the 120-seat lower chamber, with the Liberal Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (LDPU) dominating the parliament with 41 (34%) seats. The People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU) won 33 seats (25%), Fidokorlar 19 seats (16%), Milliy Tiklanish 11 seats (9%), Adolat 9 seats (9%), and initiative group candidates 7 seats (7%). Fifteen percent of incumbents won re-election to the lower house. The Central Election Commission (CEC) reported 80% voter turnout for the second round, a figure which opposition activists highly doubted, based on anecdotal evidence on election day. One opposition activist estimated voter turnout at about 30%.

IRI was pleased to learn that Milliy Tiklanish candidate from the Chilanزار District of Tashkent and IRI public speaking alumnus, Olim Usarov, won his race for a parliamentary seat in the second round. He cited IRI training in his campaign literature. Other sources told IRI he mentioned IRI during his campaign. In the first round, Mr. Usarov dominated the other candidates by winning 43% of the votes, while his closest opponent received 22%.

Run-off elections for city and regional kengashis (councils) also were held on January 9. These regional elected bodies receive little notice in Uzbekistan and essentially function according to the dictates of the local hokim. Nevertheless, they represent a local unit of elected office that are worthy of attention for possible development in the future.

By January 20, local kengashis has selected 84 (six senators each from 12 oblasts, Karakalpakstan Republic and the city of Tashkent) of the 100 senators in the new Senate.

The remaining 16 senators serve at the pleasure of the President. The actual functioning and influence of the new two-chamber parliament remains to be developed.

Overshadowing the opening session of the new two-chamber parliament and IRI's desire to implement its democracy assistance work plan, were a warning from President Karimov to international NGOs and diplomats to desist from helping local organizations or groups not recognized by the Uzbekistan government, and an obstinate Ministry of Justice that rejected Greg Stephenson's accreditation. The latter negatively impacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MFA) authority to issue Mr. Stephenson more than a temporary visa. Under these circumstances, it was difficult for IRI to conduct programming. This treatment also extended to IRI's locally-hired program assistant (PA): at IRI's request, the PA applied for an exit visa to help monitor the Kyrgyzstani parliamentary election, but was denied exit permission and access to his own passport for over 30 days.

On March 3, IRI learned that the Ministry of Justice rejected Mr. Stephenson's accreditation. The official letter stressed the Ministry's support for IRI, but not for Mr. Stephenson. The official letter mentioned no infractions, and Ministry officials declined to provide him with concrete reasons for rejecting his accreditation. The rejection put his visa status and ability to conduct programming into question. Mr. Stephenson met with U.S. government personnel to report the rejection and get their interpretation of it. According to Ambassador Purnell, representations to approve accreditation for all U.S. personnel working for USG-funded organizations were made to President Karimov and to Foreign Minister Ganiev, but to no avail in IRI's case. On the visa issue, IRI President Lorne Craner met in Washington, D.C. with Uzbekistan Ambassador Abdulaziz Kamilov. Subsequently, the MFA issued Mr. Stephenson a three-month visa.

## **II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

Program objectives as stated in the work plan are:

- A. Democracy education at the makhalla (the smallest political unit in Uzbekistan) level to inform community leaders and voters of their rights, voting procedures, the responsibilities of the election commissions, understanding an election campaign, and the responsibilities of their elected officials.
- B. Democracy education for youth to help them understand participatory democracy, the current system governing Uzbekistan, and how young adults today can build a knowledge base for representative government to take root in Uzbekistan.
- C. Maintain one Democracy Information Center (DIC) each in Fergana Valley and Tashkent oblast. The DICs will be established with DRL funding, and maintained under CEPPS II funding.

IRI was compelled to keep a low profile during the quarter, first due to the Uzbekistan government's failure to act on Mr. Stephenson's visa renewal (January) and

then due to the Ministry of Justice's decision to reject his accreditation (March). These circumstances brought IRI's planned activity to a virtual halt, though IRI was able to hold a series of post-election roundtables for youth to discuss the results of Uzbekistan's election to the OM lower chamber. Details of IRI's efforts to conduct programming are detailed below.

### **Post-Election Roundtable for Youth** **February 2-25, 2005**

As part of its commitment to strengthening democratic culture among citizens (SO 2.1) and increasing the availability of information on civic rights (IR 2.1.2.), IRI conducted a series of post-election roundtables for youth, as follows:

- Tashkent, February 2, Political Science Association
- Tashkent, February 5, Ozod Dekhonlar Party (ODP)
- Tashkent, February 8, LDPU, PDPU, Fidokorlar
- Tashkent, February 9, Milliy Tiklanish, Adolat
- Fergana, February 24, LDPU, PDPU, Fidokorlar
- Fergana, February 25, Milliy Tiklanish, Adolat

A series of six roundtables were conducted in Tashkent and Fergana with the PSA and the youth wings of ODP, LDPU, Fidokorlar, Adolat, Milliy Tiklanish, and the PDPU. IRI collaborated with the Institute for the Study of Civil Societies (ISCS) in arranging the roundtables with the youth wings of the five registered parties. Events with the PSA and ODP were held at alternative locations. The goal of the roundtables was to give youth a forum to discuss their observations and opinions regarding the December 26, 2004 and January 9, 2005 parliamentary elections. A total of 148 youths attended the roundtables (43% women). The roundtables were moderated by Khotam Abduraimov (Tashkent and Fergana), Karim Bakhriev (Tashkent) and Greg Stephenson (Tashkent, Fergana). Mr. Rabbimov is an Uzbekistani human rights lawyer, scholar, and activist who has established a rapport with the members of the unregistered movements and who knows the technical side of Uzbekistani election law, political system and political figures. Mr. Bakhriev is the Deputy Director at Internews and has extensive experience working with media and on political issues in Uzbekistan. The roundtable agenda was as follows:

#### **Post-Election Environment in Uzbekistan**

- I. Pre-Election
  - A. Role of Media
  - B. Political Parties and Their Campaigns
  - C. Independent Candidates and Their Campaigns
  - D. Central Election Commission Responsibilities
- II. Election Day
  - A. Did You Vote? Dec. 26 and Jan. 9?
  - B. How Was Your Experience?
  - C. Atmosphere at the Polling Station
  - D. Media Coverage

## E. District Election Commissions Responsibilities

### III. Post-Election

- A. Media Coverage
- B. Who Will Represent Your District?
- C. Is There Room For Improvement? In What Areas?
- D. Duties of the New Deputies and Senators

Participant groups and number of participants were as follows:

Political Science Association (PSA) -8

ODP- 32

LDPU - 18

Fidokorlar - 22

Adolat - 21

Milliy Tiklanish - 22

PDPU - 25

The Institute for the Study of Civil Society (ISCS) provided valuable support by contacting and inviting the participants from the political parties. ISCS provided space for the roundtables in each region and made arrangements for the coffee breaks. To avoid any unnecessary scrutiny from the government of Uzbekistan, the PSA roundtable was held at the IRI office, and the ODP roundtable was held at the home of a U.S. Embassy officer.

It was apparent that the ISCS sent its own people to observe the events. Although this went against the spirit and focus of the roundtable on youth, there was little IRI could do to prevent it. In general, Uzbekistan officials are afraid of youth and the perceived potential for them to become “irresponsible” during political discussions. However, the roundtable moderators created an atmosphere of constructiveness, and at times, humor. This combination allowed the students to feel comfortable voicing their opinions to a certain extent, and alleviated ISCS adult observers’ concerns that the youth would be come too politicized.

IRI distributed hand-outs concerning the election law and a list of the newly-elected parliamentarians contributed to the discussions effectively. The following is a breakdown of each roundtable event.

#### Tashkent, February 2, Political Science Association (PSA)

Eight youth participated, including four women (50%). The roundtable was held at the IRI office and was moderated by Greg Stephenson.

The PSA is a group of fifteen recent graduates from the Tashkent Law Institute, Tashkent State University, and the Institute of World Economy and Diplomacy. They are a highly active and creative group in need of support and guidance. Eventually they would like to become a registered NGO with the goal of spreading political science education to the regions. They are also interested in becoming political activists. IRI is

considering long-term collaboration with this group. Hosting the roundtable was one way to assess the PSA's potential for future political activism.

Three participants volunteered to give presentations of their findings while working as assistants to OSCE observers during the election. The conversation was lively, constructive, and open-minded. All participants agreed that the pre-election phase lacked the necessary ingredients to be considered a free and fair election. Although they do not believe that the opposition offers a compelling choice for the electorate (although one participant noted that Erk has the most understandable platform among the opposition movements), they think the opposition should have been allowed to participate in the election. Participants argued that, since opposition groups were refused registration status, the whole point of the election – voter choice – was lost. The group noted that the media failed in its information role by not reporting or not accurately reporting the opposition movements' goals and their problems with the government. One participant mentioned that it seemed as if the role of the media was to report sterile facts alone, which forced honest, open discussions to the margins.

None of the participants attended any of the candidate forums sponsored by the makhallas, but all were aware of them and doubted they contributed to meaningful debate and discussion of the issues important to the electorate. One participant said that according to his research, none of the candidates truly represented their constituents, and that most were chosen by people in authority “fill-the-gaps” where there were no candidates running in certain electoral districts.

All of the participants found this roundtable necessary not only for themselves but for the public at large. This is a highly motivated group that would like to receive additional trainings, seminars, and roundtables sponsored by IRI. They would like to develop their organizational skills, learn more about activism, and create a youth organization that is not aligned with any political party or ideology to constructively address issues that face Uzbekistan. At the conclusion of this roundtable, plans were already being drawn up to conduct a roundtable on the Tajik and Kyrgyz elections, training sessions on the new bi-cameral legislature, and organize a series of meetings with elected officials.

#### *Tashkent, February 5, Ozod Dekhonlar Party (ODP)*

Thirty-two youth participated, including five women (16%). Due to the previous warnings from the Ministry of Justice to cease working with “non-registered entities,” this roundtable was held at the home of a U.S. embassy officer. IRI received a telephone call the night before the event from the National Security Services (NSS) to cancel the event. Despite this warning, the event went forward as planned. Most of the participants were from the Chirchik area near Tashkent. ODP paid for their transportation to the site. The roundtable was moderated by Karim Bakhriev and Greg Stephenson. The original moderator, Khotam Abduraimov, backed out of the event after being pressured by the authorities not to participate.

At first, the participants were reluctant to speak their opinions; as the roundtable progressed they became more active but they never attained the level of engagement the

other groups did. Despite the moderators' urgings, this was the most inactive group of the series. The participants lacked basic knowledge of democracy or of their rights, which forced the moderators to speak within their sphere.

The participants offered a few insights: the CEC was active in the Chirchik region, but the information disseminated was not enough to inform voters of their rights and responsibilities; the candidates did not offer anything more than the government already claims it is doing. Another youth was disappointed that political parties do not take an active role in attracting youth to their movement. One moderator told him that there are laws in Uzbekistan that prohibit parties from recruiting youth, but there are discussions among lawmakers to change this.

When asked if they voted on December 26, only seven said that they did and one of them, when pressed, could not recall who he voted for or for what reasons. He said he voted because he was "told to do it." This produced a stifled laugh because it supported the argument of the majority of the group that did not vote. Voter apathy was the overriding reason why they did not vote, and they based this upon the lack of a fair election.

*Tashkent, February 8, Multi-party*

Thirty-one people were present, including 16 women (52%). Members from the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan (PDPU), Liberal-Democratic Party (LDPU), and Fidokorlar were present. This roundtable was held in collaboration with the ISCS, whose contribution entailed providing space for the participants and extending invitations to them. The event was moderated by Khotam Abduraimov and Greg Stephenson.

IRI had worked with these youth wings before, so there were familiar faces. Since there were "chaperones" present at this event, the dialogue was slightly subdued compared to the previous two roundtables. One youth expressed the opinion that the Oliy Majlis and Senate are designed to pass new laws that can "cure any sickness in our society." A "chaperone" chipped in by encouraging youth to work with the OM and media to advance democracy. After the first hour, it became apparent to the moderators that the ISCS was doing its best to make certain that the points being discussed were kept within the ideology of the Uzbek government. However, this did not stop one student in voicing his opinion that Uzbekistan is in need of an opposition if democracy is going to have a chance to survive: "Until Uzbekistan engages with the opposition, we will never know what democracy is."

*Tashkent, February 9, Multi-party*

Twenty-five youth from Adolat and Milliy Tiklanish were present, including fifteen women (60%). As on the previous day, the event was hosted at ISCS and co-moderated by Abduraimov and Stephenson.

The roundtable started with one participant giving the government line that all deputies are responsible to their constituents and not their parties. However, many of the comments that followed expressed a candid understanding of the political realities in

Uzbekistan. Many saw the need to change the election laws, but they do not know where to start. One suggestion given was to start with laws on initiative groups to give more space for those who do not fit within established party lines. Participants noted that political parties face a major crisis of their own that they do not see: most voters think the parties do not offer real solutions and that they are simply playing their part without understanding what their responsibilities are. Participants assumed that the registered parties operate on the communist model and fail to recognize that they need to restructure in order to fit within a democratic system. This translates into a failure to appeal to the masses. Youth think that passive voters and the mass media share the blame. Mass media fails to report election information independent of the government line. Editors were labeled as “cowards” for not allowing constructive and critical articles to be printed or broadcast.

Election Day presented its own problems. The participants think that many people – including poll workers – are ignorant of their rights and the law. Some participants witnessed more than one voter in a booth, and others said that they had heard of situations where voters suffered from intimidation from their bosses to vote for a particular candidate. Most felt that if a viable independent candidate were running, they would have voted for that person. This statement was interesting, considering that these were youths representing a political party. Also, it was suggested that the law should be amended to allow the voter to vote against all the candidates.

#### *Fergana, February 24, Multi-party*

Thirty-one youth were present, including thirteen women (42%). A few of the participants were beyond the targeted age group. The parties represented were the PDPU, Fidokorlar, and the LDPU. Also present were the regional party leaders from Fidokorlar and the LDPU, and a losing candidate for the Oliy Majlis. As with the events in Tashkent, this was hosted in collaboration with the ISCS and co-moderated by Abduraimov and Stephenson.

One participant, who had attended previous IRI youth trainings, told the group that IRI has an important role in assisting Uzbekistan as it moves towards democracy. Many of the participants agreed that the Uzbekistan government is doing too little to allow democracy to develop and that Uzbekistan’s elected officials are “in it for their own personal gain” and do not make serious efforts to communicate with the public.

Participants who had studied the parties’ platforms agreed that the parties need to do a great deal more work to effectively communicate their programs to the average Uzbekistani voter. These youth think the parties have failed to have the courage to stand up for what they know is right, even when it may mean disagreeing with the president (e.g. cuts in teacher’s benefits or the plight of farmers). Some even lamented the fact that none of the parties had issued a statement/opinion on terrorism. The parties need to extend themselves by actively recruiting youth, although Stephenson added that currently this is against the law in Uzbekistan.

A woman who ran as a candidate for the Oliy Majlis had an interesting account to relate to the roundtable participants. During a candidate “debate” before the election,

many of the candidates were criticized for not fighting for their constituents once they are elected. Her response was, “If I will fight for your rights, will you stand by me?” According to her, she was met with a silent response. In her opinion, this is a perfect example of the lack of courage Uzbekistanis face when confronted with adversity.

One young woman contributed that, in her opinion, “most people could not have cared less about the election.” In response, another participant suggested that “the people should not be blamed for a lack of interest or knowledge; this may only suggest that they don’t believe in the system.”

#### *Fergana, February 25, Multi-party*

Twenty-one youths from Milliy Tiklanish and Adolat were present, including eleven women (52%). The roundtable was hosted in collaboration with the ISCS and co-moderated by Abduraimov and Stephenson.

The participants were engaged and active in the discussion. They expressed satisfaction with the system in place, but agreed that more knowledge needs to be disseminated in order for it to function properly.

During the election campaign, many of the participants were incredulous about the candidates and their statements. Most of them made promises that the electorate knew they could not keep. These statements had a tendency to push people away from interest in the election campaign. Another added that “if someone was brave enough to express their opinions, perhaps we wouldn’t have these problems today.” Unknown to the participants, co-moderator Abduraimov was forced to flee the country for two years for disagreeing with government policy. Some participants were dissatisfied that the candidates are not required to reside in his/her district to qualify as a candidate. Another suggested that there were too many candidates, which overwhelmed the average voter.

The participants thought that the parties should take a more active role in the political process, and criticize the status quo when necessary. These youth had the impression that the parties are unaware of what their role is during the campaign, which increases the amount of confusion for the average voter. Another participant responded that Uzbekistanis should increase their participation with the party of their choice, since “they protect our rights.” On the other hand, many believed that the political parties “spout nothing but hot air”. There was a consensus that the media actively practices self-censorship, making it a tool of the government and preventing meaningful election coverage.

A few said that they suffered from voter intimidation from their rectors. In all the cases, the rector threatened to ruin their grades.

#### *Participant Evaluations*

IRI’s roundtable evaluation form given to the participants was designed to allow them the freedom to express themselves clearly. This means that beyond the ratings of the trainer/moderator and the theme, that they can anonymously write their opinions



about the current training and suggestions for upcoming events. Despite being encouraged to write down their thoughts, opinions, and suggestions, many found it burdensome to write their thoughts down. At previous trainings, it had been noticed that some participants resorted to copying their neighbor's comments. This has prompted IRI to announce that copying is not permitted on the evaluation forms.

Although most of the participants said that they held no reservations to having the roundtables conducted in Russian, it was obvious that they were relieved that the language of choice was Uzbek. A translator was present to help Stephenson keep pace with the conversation. All enjoyed participating in an open discussion environment via the roundtable format.

In Tashkent, many respondents to the evaluation suggested that it would be helpful for IRI to hire a respected trainer to inform them of the roles and responsibilities of the Senate. Coupled with this, many were in agreement that it would be beneficial to invite international experts on parliaments throughout the world. It is gratifying that they see the need to broaden and supplement their knowledge on democratic systems.

### **Other Activity**

**Democracy Information Centers (DICs).** IRI continued to research the feasibility of opening two DICs, one in Fergana and one in Tashkent oblast. IRI tried to partner with the National University in Tashkent for one of the DICs, but received mixed signals from the dean and the new rector. Further research yielded the ISCS' verbal agreement to support both. IRI is seeking to structure the DICs to avoid any tax liabilities. The most prudent structure seems to be partnering with a local entity through a service contract, so that the local entity devises its own budget that IRI's funds pays for, but on a non-grant basis. IRI is hoping to work out a contract with the ISCS to run the DICs both in Fergana and Tashkent, staffing both of them with PSA members.

**Ozod Dekhonlar Party (ODP).** Throughout the quarter, and despite warnings from the Uzbekistan government, IRI continued to meet with ODP leaders on an informal basis. ODP has pleaded with IRI to continue its technical and moral support of the party, but it understands IRI's delicate situation regarding warnings from the Ministry of Justice and Stephenson's accreditation. ODP has been active in further developing its organization and recruiting members. It claims to have attracted a core of intellectuals that could function as a cabinet of ministers. In a related development, the Ministry of Justice closed down ODP's affiliated trade union Zamindar ("Harvester"), for the ostensible reason that it was too closely aligned with the ODP (despite Zamindar's existence since 1995). The ODP continued to operate in the open, despite harassment from the authorities. The party held several press conferences to publicize this harassment, to call for the removal of a regional hokim, and in joint press conference with Erk, to support the Kyrgyzstan revolution.

**Opposition Coalition Building.** In January, IRI hosted meetings with leaders from the three opposition movements to discuss leadership dialogue sessions. Nigora Khidoyatova (ODP) is in favor – as she has always been – of forming a coalition with the other movements and is pleased with IRI's coalition building dialogue proposal.

Iskandar Khodaiberganov (Birlik) sees the potential of a new coalition since he, and others in the movement, perceive that the Davr Kengashi (Birlik's attempt at a coalition) has not done a good job of including the other movements in formulating a true democratic opposition front. Atanazar Arifov (Erk) fully endorses this latest attempt at coalition building. He suggested creating concrete activities to encourage cooperation and establishing criteria for membership in the coalition.

**Political Science Association (PSA):** The PSA is a student-run organization at the National University. The group's goal is to promote civic education training for the public. PSA previously received support from the OSCE, but then fell dormant. It also tried to register as an NGO, but was rejected. Under a new student director, Ruslan Ramanov, it would like a new international sponsor to help it broaden the scope of work to include community activism and to develop along the lines of student movements in Georgia, and Ukraine. The PSA's membership is 20-24 year olds. IRI met with seven members and was impressed with their energy, knowledge, and creativity. Their main objective is to function as a civic education NGO, but other ideas include:

1. Creation of a youth movement "Yetar" (Enough)
2. Publication of a movement bulletin
3. Creation of a network of students (including the regions) committed to democracy education to the regions
4. Creation of an internet bulletin board
5. Creation of a student exchange program to meet students from other countries.

Although PSA has good ideas, it is rudderless and lacks a place to meet. It used to meet at the National University's Resource Center, but this ceased when the Center's hours of operation became severely limited. IRI has agreed to guide the group in its ongoing formation. IRI instructed the PSA to draft bylaws that will govern the club. After this is accomplished, IRI will conduct development training to help the group chart out its future.

**Institute for the Study of Civil Society (ISCS).** IRI proposed collaboration with ISCS on operating two Democracy Information Centers (DICs) (Fergana, Tashkent). Director Azimjon Rakhmonov expressed enthusiasm, but said he would first like to discuss it with ISCS's board of directors. At follow-up meetings during the quarter, ISCS verbally agreed to collaborate with IRI, but it reserved the right to ban opposition activists from using the DICs. In addition, it appeared that the ISCS still harbors suspicion about IRI's activities: its chairman of the Board contacted IRI's local trainer, Komoliden Rabbimov to query him about IRI's activities. Subsequently, Mr. Rabbimov declined to meet with Stephenson at the IRI office, claiming it is under electronic surveillance.

**Council of Aksakals of Uzbekistan and Makhalla Fund.** IRI met with Azamjon Gadaibaiyev (Chairman), Nigmatilla Abdullayev, and Samin Rakhimov (Ziyoso Center) to discuss training plans for the aksakals. At first, Mr. Gadaibaiyev accepted IRI's training proposal and agenda, but he later expressed reluctance to work with IRI, saying that the Council needs to know more about IRI and its programs in order to notify the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about possible collaboration. Eventually, IRI

and the Council scheduled democracy education training for aksakals, only to have it cancelled when the Council received a letter from the Ministry of Justice stating that it was breaking the law by its involvement with IRI. Any further collaboration between the two organizations must receive prior approval from the Ministry of Justice.

**National University.** IRI met with Ms. Gulmira Usupova (Dean of Political and Social Sciences) to discuss collaboration on opening a DIC connected to the National University. National University worked with the OSCE and the German Embassy on a democracy resource center, but it appeared to IRI to suffer from neglect by both. The resource center has a small conference room, TV, VCR, library, printer, and nine computers, but no internet connection. The center lacks \$5,000 to install a cable that will connect it to the satellite dish on campus. The library was sparsely supplied with books (English, German, Russian, and French languages) on democracy, human rights, and a few other government publications in Uzbek. Soros and Fredrich Ebert have conducted roundtables, seminars, and trainings in the past, but there was nothing scheduled for the winter semester and Ms. Usupova was anxious to collaborate with new partners to reactivate the Center.

IRI and the National University had agreed to jointly host a post-election roundtable discussion for youth. However, shortly before the event, Ms. Usupova cancelled it with the explanation that the university had a new rector who would first need to meet IRI before agreeing to any joint events for the students. When IRI responded that it is available to meet with the rector immediately, Ms. Usupova said that the rector will contact IRI when he is ready.

**Democracy assistance meetings.** IRI attended several meetings at OSCE, EuropeAid, Eurasia Foundation, and other venues to keep apprised of the status and programming of other foreign democracy assistance organizations and to keep them informed of IRI's work.

### III. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

#### **Expected Result 1: More engaged electorate at the makhalla level.**

Indicators:

- A. Makhalla contact and relationship-building with Oliy Majlis deputy on pertinent issues
- B. Makhalla use of DICs
- C. Makhalla outreach (direct or through local media) to residents/voters, including young adults

*No new results to report.*

#### **Expected Result 2: Youth more knowledgeable and engaged in political advocacy.**

Indicators:

- A. Youth volunteers and involvement at DICs
- B. Youth membership in a political action group (club, movement, NGO, party)
- C. Youth participation in the makhalla.

Although the quarter did not produce measurable progress in the indicators cited above, IRI did reach out to youth via the series of post-election roundtable discussions. These roundtables were a first step in connecting with Uzbekistan youth and exposing them to idea that Uzbekistan's election and political environment are worthy of discussion, particularly among youth.

A total of 148 youths from the five registered political parties, one unregistered NGO, and one political movement participated at the roundtable events. 64 (43%) of the participants were women. Percentage breakdown of attendance by party/group is as follows:

Adolat: 14%  
Milliy Tiklanish: 15%  
PDPU: 17%  
LDPU: 12%  
Fidokorlar: 15%  
ODP: 22%  
PSA: 5%

The overall goal of the roundtables was to give youth the opportunity to voice their concerns, opinions, and criticisms on the recent elections in an open environment free from intimidation. The discussions with all of the groups were open and at times, refreshingly candid.

Throughout all of the roundtables, there was a common thread that attached different themes together: the lack of genuine political expression. For example, the election campaign lacked vigor because the candidates either repeated the same slogans or they repeated what the president said. Many recognized that most candidates and parties do not have the skills to develop their own programs which the public can understand. During the campaign, the organizational skills of the parties were sub-par, which contributed to tarnishing the image of the parties to the public. Furthermore, they did not like the perceived lack of transparency throughout the campaign. Many others felt that a spirited debate among the candidates would have decreased voter apathy.

The participants seemed to gain a deeper understanding of the role and responsibilities that their representatives have undertaken once being elected. The seeds have been planted that their elected officials need to know that they are being monitored by activists to see how closely they adhere to their campaign promises.

There was general sympathy for elected officials who work in the Oliy Majlis. They understand that the country is far from reflecting a democracy in any form, and that the government is mainly controlled by the actions of a select few close to the president, which limits the amount of influence that the deputies have. However, they would like to have their representatives show more courage at OM sessions and defend their constituents' interests when appropriate.

Many recognized that there are some bad laws, but there are no specialists who can amend them. Particular focus was put on reforming the laws on political parties.

Many felt that it would be salubrious to make it easier for initiative groups and independent candidates to register for the election.

**Performance for Indicator A:** *No new results to report.*

**Performance for Indicator B:** With the strategic objective of strengthening democratic culture among citizens (SO 2.1) and increasing the availability of information on civic rights (IR 2.1.2.) for youth in mind, IRI began cultivating a working relationship with the youth-oriented Political Science Association (PSA). The two sides met on several occasions during the quarter to lay the foundations for future work together. IRI anticipates that future programming involving the PSA will focus on growing its youth membership and pursuing the PSA's ideas of promoting civic education and forming a functional and consequential youth movement in Uzbekistan.

**Performance for Indicator C:** *No new results to report.*

**Expected Result 3: Established Democracy Information Centers for the voting public.**

Indicators:

- A. Two DIC operating, developing, and planning for sustainability
- B. Local voting community use of DICs (voters, schools, NGOs, etc.)

**Performance for Indicator A:** *No new results to report.*

**Performance for Indicator B:** *No new results to report.*